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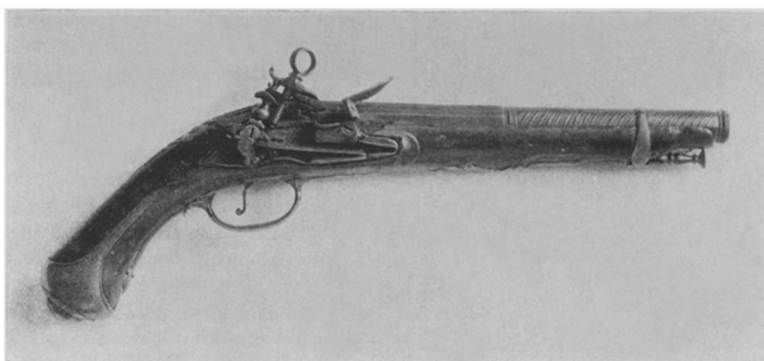
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### An Exhibit of Firearms

THE Museum is indebted to Mr. Charles Winthrop Sawyer, of Boston, for a loan from his collection of firearms. The exhibit has been installed in the Western Ground Floor Corridor, opposite the telephone desk. Mr. Sawyer kindly contributes the following notes regarding the objects shown.

These pieces illustrate the development of firing mechanism and the principle of repetition of fire, and are confined for the most part to the types of arms used in America during the formative period.

The decorated matchlock guns and pistols and the cross-bow pistol were not, in their day, identified with American history, but wheellock, snap-haunce, flintlock, and other arms were used in this country for both sport and war. The early days of our country saw constant strife for food and home, and firearms were then men's most cherished possessions. In America the making of firearms was the chief of the skilled industries, and probably the most respected; armorers quickly gained wealth, reputation, and civil and military rank. Immigrants of means owned also works of the European master armorers, so that the arms which fought the wars of our country marked the scale all the way from the least pretentious to the most elegantly decorated. Some of them were — in form, grace of line, perfect joinery, and studied detail — really masterpieces and works of art.

As a piece of modelling in hard steel the Highlander pistol made by Robert Caddell about 1670 is remarkable for craftsmanship; hand forging of that quality is no longer practised. As an example of remarkable grace of line from all points of view, the double barrelled shotgun by Henry Nock has never been surpassed; nor has any armorer, except Joseph Manton, whose teacher Nock was, ever achieved greater fame.

After about 1750 America began to lead the world in weapons of precision. The art of rifling, practised on wrong principles in Germany from as early as 1550, matured only in this country; and

the result was a new type of firearm, distinctively American. A typical specimen of this arm is shown in the long rifle of Daniel Boone's time — the so-called "Boone" rifle, because his skill in its use was so conspicuous. The specimen shown was made in Reading, Penn., probably about 1770.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the United States government forged to the front among nations as the maker of the finest military rifle of the world. Such an arm is shown by the Harper's Ferry rifle, ninety-three years old, graceful, elegantly made, and still as good as new inside and out. Our muskets, also, were above the ordinary; and the perfect one made ninety-two years ago at the Springfield Armory, having a primer-magazine attached to the lock, was an advance in design and workmanship on anything made by foreign governments.

Another type of firearm wherewith America led the world was the revolver. Skillful men of other countries had for centuries tried to evolve a practical one, but the first successful output came from Paterson, N. J. The "Texas" revolver shown is one of those, and judging by its serial number was one of the earliest made. The various mechanisms used in revolving and locking a horizontal cylinder are shown by the line of American products, and the ineffectual attempt of a European designer, wherewith the cylinder was hung on the cart wheel principle and percussion pills instead of copper caps were used for ignition, is placed with them in evidence of their superior design.

The unsuccessful rival of the revolver, the pepper-box, varied from the simplest to the most complex. Of the former, the Allen was perhaps in its day the leader; and of the latter, the European Comblain was the most decorated and the least serviceable. Among compound pepperboxes, the Leonard stands without a peer. This was an American invention of 1849.

In representative groupings firearms form a fascinating and valuable study; and, in addition, each individual piece possesses a charm of its own.